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## Bully Violence Prevention Conference

By: Judge Dean T. Stout

**I am pleased to extend an invitation to the public to attend the Bully-Victim Violence Prevention Conference to be held at the Charles Brown Auditorium on the Fairgrounds in Bishop from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Friday September 24, 2004.** This conference provides a unique and exciting opportunity for the community to support our local schools in their efforts to combat bullying behaviors. Thanks to grants from the Inyo County Child Abuse Prevention Council and First 5 Inyo County, as well as support from the Inyo County Domestic Violence Council and the Owens Valley Career Development Center, **there is no charge for the conference. Registration forms can be obtained at public libraries, or the Superior Court in Bishop or Independence. The registration deadline is September 3<sup>rd</sup>.** There will be a "working lunch," and you are encouraged to register early, as a free lunch will be provided "as long as supplies last." Spanish interpretation with headsets will be available. **Anyone with questions may contact me at 873-5939 or 872-2597.**

Recognizing the importance of the issue and the value of this workshop, many school districts, including Bishop Union Elementary and Bishop Union High School, have set aside September 24, 2004 as a teacher buy-back day, so that all their teachers can participate in the conference.

In addition to school administrators, teachers, and staff, we hope to have parents and guardians of school aged children, and other concerned citizens in attendance. We are looking forward to a good turn-out of individuals involved in law enforcement, counseling services, child care providers, as well as clergy and other members of the faith community.

The workshop will be presented by Marriage and Family Therapist Mitchell Rosen. Along with several representatives of our local schools and law enforcement, I was privileged to hear Mr. Rosen's presentation on this subject at the Riverside County Office of Education, and was very impressed with the content of his workshop. Mr. Rosen will cover such topics as identifying bullying behaviors, dispelling myths about bullying, reasons why some people feel entitled to bully, hate violence, how we may actually enable violence, characteristics of bullies, effects of violence on children, and characteristics of provocative victims of bullying. He will also address appropriate and inappropriate responses to bullying behaviors, as well as provide specific strategies for parents of bullies and parents of victims.

Please understand that this conference and other efforts to address bullying are not to be construed as any criticism of our local schools. To the contrary, I am impressed by the continuous efforts that our schools have made to address a problem that has plagued students for generations. We are fortunate to live in a community that does not

have to deal with such issues as drive-by shootings and serious gang violence, and can allocate our resources to such things as school bullying. Bullying is not just a school issue, and we have an opportunity to help our schools in addressing what is truly a community issue.

In addition to learning how to appropriately respond to bullies and victims, we also need to learn how our children themselves can change the culture of bullying.

Students themselves are the key to success. We can teach our children kindness, tolerance, and to value diversity. Students can learn that one's self-worth is not measured by strength, size, or power. Students can understand that power is an opportunity to help others, and not an opportunity to intimidate or hurt others. Students can create a campus atmosphere where being kind and helpful is "cool," while abusing power is not. With proper support, young people can choose to have a campus where the students support each other, in a safe environment that is conducive to learning. Our children are entitled to safe schools, free of violence, and free of fear, intimidation, humiliation, and ridicule that distract from the learning process and adversely affect personal and social development.

I hope you will join me on September 24<sup>th</sup> as we learn more about bully-victim violence, and start to develop strategies to prevent bullying.

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